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Selected Target Audience Profiles for Promoting the Dietary Guidelines for Americans

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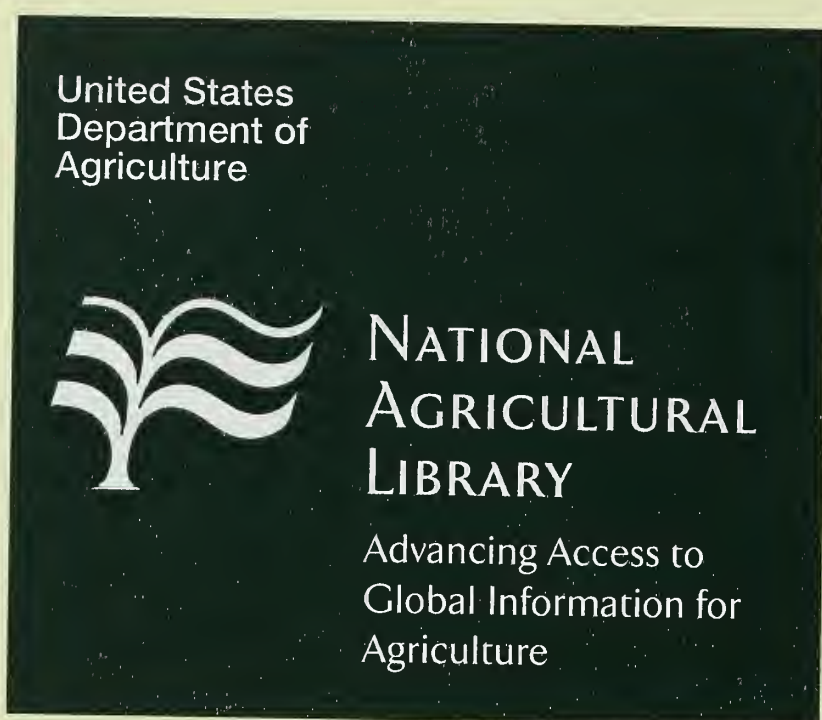
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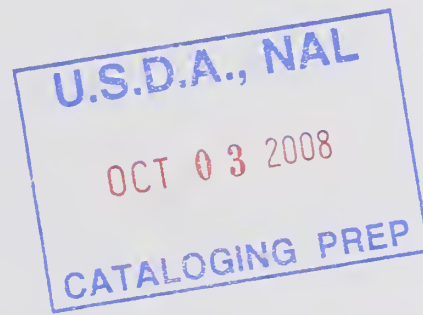
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Conception, analysis, and authorship of this project were by a working group in the USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion consisting of Kay Loughrey, M.P.H, R.D., Team Leader for Social Marketing; Clarie Zizza, M.S., R.D., Nutritionist; and Peter Basiotis, Ph.D., Senior Economist.



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Foreword

I am pleased that the USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP) was able to conduct the analysis of these selected audience profiles for promoting the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Further, we are pleased to be working in liaison with the Dietary Guidelines Alliance to promote the Guidelines.

The message of the Alliance is consistent with that of the USDA/DHHS Dietary Guidelines for Americans that with balance, variety, and moderation, all foods can fit into a healthful diet, and that nutrition and physical activity are inseparable for achieving a healthy, active lifestyle.

The mission of the Alliance, a nonprofit organization whose membership is made up of health and food industry organizations, is to promote the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, not to interpret them. Interpretation of nutrition, medical, and scientific information is the responsibility of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee, an independent group of widely respected nutrition and medical experts.

Today, as never before, the Federal Government is examining improved ways to promote nutrition and nutrition education for a healthy America. If you would like additional information about the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, the Food Guide Pyramid, or the Dietary Guidelines Alliance, please call our office at (202) 418-2312.

Again, we are pleased to make this information available.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eileen Kennedy".

Eileen Kennedy, D.Sc., R.D.

Executive Director

Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion

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Background

The Dietary Guidelines Alliance consists of health and food industry organizations working in liaison with government and private organizations that are interested in promoting healthy lifestyles through positive, simple, and consistent messages to the American consumer. The Alliance was formed in 1995 to cooperatively develop nutrition messages based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans issued by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) (1). Working cooperatively with the USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion and other Federal agencies, the Alliance targets its messages to healthy adults, particularly focusing on women because they often act as gatekeepers to shape their families' nutrition and health.



Logo of the Dietary Guidelines Alliance

The mission of the Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP) is to improve the nutritional status of Americans by linking research to the consumer. As a recognized authority in the field, CNPP provides food and nutrition guidance based on current scientific research to the American public, policymakers, and professional and media multipliers in furtherance of the ultimate goal of improving the diet and health of all Americans.

The Alliance bases its partnership activities on sound science and consumer research. It has made a commitment to research-based decisionmaking and to listening to and acting upon consumer wants and needs. This direction is consistent with USDA/DHHS research efforts to promote the Dietary Guidelines that indicates that nutrition promotion should focus on behavior change; have a strong consumer orientation; segment and target consumers; use multiple, reinforcing, interactive channels; and continuously refine consumer messages (2).

The Dietary Guidelines Alliance has listened to consumers to discover and understand their values, beliefs about health, nutrition, and physical activity by conducting focus groups throughout the country. The Alliance's campaign theme "It's All About You" and the supporting tag line "Make healthy choices that fit your lifestyle so you can do the things you want to do" were developed and tested with focus groups (3). The supporting messages include:

- **Be Realistic**
Make small changes over time in what you eat and the level of activity you do. After all, small steps work better than giant leaps.
- **Be Adventurous**
Expand your tastes to enjoy a variety of foods.
- **Be Flexible**
Go ahead and balance what you eat and the physical activity you do over several days. No need to worry about just one meal or one day.
- **Be Sensible**
Enjoy all foods, just don't overdo it.
- **Be Active**
Walk the dog, don't just watch the dog walk.





The focus groups identified that good health is important to consumers because it makes them feel more confident, energetic, and productive, and that good health means eating well and getting enough exercise. The focus groups provided additional insights about what consumers believe, obstacles to more healthful eating, and how to more effectively communicate with them about nutrition. For example, one of the findings from these focus groups was that many consumers are confused about conflicting nutrition information from news sources.

Access to additional research data can enhance Alliance efforts to understand their target audience. It can provide information about additional health and lifestyle characteristics such as attitudes, feelings, and practices related to food and nutrition for a representative sample of the target audience. Access to this kind of data can also help confirm focus group findings. With an in-depth understanding of its target audience that has been informed by consumer research, the Alliance will be well positioned to improve the diets of Americans.

Methods

The USDA's Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP) analyzed the MRCA database, a nationally representative database that consists of information on food and beverage consumption of individuals and opinions and attitudes regarding general interests, health, diet and food preparation, shopping, and media usage. CNPP used the Alliance audience of women gatekeepers as the basis for this analysis to add to the Alliance's understanding of their target audience. CNPP developed profiles of these women based on this analysis to help the Alliance get their messages out in the most effective ways possible.

In carrying out this research, CNPP selected a subsample of the MRCA data to match the selection criteria as closely as possible for Alliance focus group testing of women gatekeepers. The selected subsample consisted of 501 female gatekeepers between the ages of 25 and 55. Research staff then divided the subsample into three subsets or segments of female gatekeepers. CNPP used a segmentation approach because women gatekeepers may differ in some ways and may not respond equally well to the same messages. Segmentation, a frequently used approach in commercial sector marketing, has been applied in national campaigns aiming to change health behaviors (4,5).

CNPP staff divided (segmented) the Alliance audience based on a modified version of the USDA Healthy Eating Index (HEI), an indicator of overall

diet quality (6). The HEI was used to identify characteristics that distinguish women with higher quality diets from those with lower quality diets. Women in this subsample were ranked and divided into equal thirds (tertiles) according to their HEI score. Individual profiles were then developed for each tertile of the sample.

Using multiple T-tests, researchers developed profiles of the Alliance target audience of women gatekeepers. The technique of developing target audience profiles has been used recently in large scale nutrition education programs including the National Cancer Institute's 5 A Day media campaign (7) and the Centers for Disease Control's Nutrition and Physical Activity program (8). This technique has been used to create a profile or snapshot that personifies the target audience. This personification encourages the development of creative communication efforts that are tailored to the target audience (9). For this profile development, the top tertile was given the name Betty Better Eater, the middle tertile--Faye Fair Eater, and the bottom tertile--Paula Poor Eater to reflect their differences in diet quality.



Results

Results are presented below for the Dietary Guidelines Alliance audience of women gatekeepers. Characteristics that the three subsets of women have in common are presented in table 1. Betty Better Eater, with the highest quality diet score of these three subsets of women, serves as a basis of comparison with Faye Fair Eater and Paula Poor Eater. Betty Better Eater has been selected as the comparison group because she more closely meets the recommendations of the USDA Food Guide Pyramid than the other two subsets of women. Profiles for Faye Fair Eater and Paula Poor Eater compared with Betty Better Eater are presented in table 2.

Demographic and Health Status Characteristics

The three subsets of women have similar ages, household sizes, and household incomes. The three groups exhibit small differences regarding race, average years of education, Body Mass Index (BMI), and likelihood of having children. Betty Better Eater is more likely to be white than Paula Poor Eater. Faye and Paula have fewer years of education than Betty. Paula is twice as likely as Betty to have completed no more than a high school education and is half as likely to have 4 years of college. Faye is also more likely to have completed no more than a high school education and is less likely to have 4 years of college. Betty is less likely to have children than Faye. Betty also has a lower BMI score than Paula because Betty is slightly taller than Paula.

Overall, the three sets of women have a number of similarities (see table 1). Representatives of these three audiences, Betty Better Eater, Faye Fair Eater, and Paula Poor Eater, generally say they are in good or excellent health and believe that it is important for them to live long and healthy lives.

Table I
Common Characteristics of All Three Subsets of the
Dietary Guidelines Alliance Audience of Women Gatekeepers¹

Demographics

They are all about the same age, have the same number of household members, and similar household incomes.

Physical Activity

They exercise with similar frequency.

Psychographics

They like to meet new people, join actively in community groups, and be well respected.

They like the outdoors and enjoy taking the family to a different vacation spot each year.

Shopping

They make a complete list before going shopping.

They enjoy browsing through the aisles of a supermarket but do not like the excitement of a busy supermarket.

They save a lot of money by shopping around for food bargains.

They stock up on named brand foods that they like when there is a sale.

Because they do not see it as trouble, they cut coupons out of newspapers and magazines and almost always redeem them.

They also send away for items offered through advertising.

They are more willing to pay for certain food items when used for special occasions.

Food Planning and Preparation

They enjoy cooking and think of themselves as creative cooks.

When alone, they do not like to bother cooking just for themselves and they do enjoy preparing a fancy meal for their families once in awhile.

They collect recipes from the food sections of newspapers and they also exchange recipes with friends and relatives.

They almost always add something extra to prepared foods when they cook them.

They serve the same evening meals from one week to the next.

Although they try to make use of leftovers, they usually throw them out.

Family Eating Habits

Some members of their families are concerned about being overweight.

Diet Orientation

They believe they are knowledgeable about health and nutrition.

They are interested in improving their diets.

They think they have some weight to lose and try at least occasionally to lose weight.

It is important for them to live a long and healthy life.

¹ We considered attributes common if more than 60 percent of each group exhibited them and they were not statistically different at the .01 level of significance.

Table 2
Faye Fair Eater Compare with Betty Better Eater

I. Ways that Faye is AS LIKELY as Betty to say that:

- Eating a healthy diet is important to me.
- I can avoid future health problems by eating healthfully.
- I choose healthy foods because they give me the energy I need.
- I choose healthy foods because they improve my physical appearance.
- I worry about the nutritional content of the foods I eat.

II. Faye is MORE LIKELY than Betty to say that:

- Healthy foods have to be convenient for me to use them.
- A reason for not choosing healthy foods is they don't taste good.
- Trying to eat healthy is too complicated and confusing.
- I'm much more willing to try a new recipe when someone I know tried it and liked it.
- I always or usually pay attention to on-shelf, aisle display ads, and instant coupons.
- I watch television in general, including entertainment programs and daytime television.
- I watch television programs like police/private eye and daytime serials/soap operas because I really like them.

III. Faye is LESS LIKELY than Betty to say that:

- I always see to it that my family takes vitamins.
 - I can avoid future health problems by exercising.
 - I make every possible effort to see that my family eats really nourishing foods.
 - I get upset if the family doesn't eat together.
 - I go out of my way to buy nonfat foods.
 - Frozen foods are more nutritious than canned foods.
 - I serve fish because it has less fat.
 - I disagree that red meat is better for your health than fish.
 - I do not look for prepared dishes when I shop.
-

Table 2 (continued)
Paula Poor Eater Compared with Betty Better Eater

I. Paula is AS LIKELY as Betty to say that:

- I always see to it that my family takes vitamins.

II. Paula is MORE LIKELY than Betty to say that:

- Eating healthy is too complicated and confusing.
- Most snack foods I like are unhealthy.
- I do not discuss various foods and their food values with my family so they understand nutrition better.
- I always or usually pay attention to instant coupons.
- I watch television in general, including entertainment programs. I watch daytime television programs.
- I watch television serials/soap operas because I really like them.

III. Paula is LESS LIKELY than Betty to say that:

- It is important for me to look and feel physically fit.
 - It is important for me to maintain a proper weight.
 - Eating a healthy diet is important to me.
 - I can avoid future health problems by eating a healthy diet.
 - I can avoid future health problems by exercising.
 - I eat healthy foods because they give me the energy I need.
 - I eat healthy foods because they improve my physical appearance.
 - I worry about the nutritional content of the foods I eat.
 - I know how to eat healthy.
 - I make every possible effort to see that my family eats really nourishing foods.
 - I get upset if the family doesn't eat together.
 - I go out of my way to buy nonfat foods.
 - Frozen foods are more nutritious than canned foods.
 - I collect recipes from magazines.
 - I disagree that my family is not easy to please.
 - I disagree that red meat is better for your health than fish.
 - I serve fish because it has less fat.
 - I watch primetime television programs.
 - I read women's general interest magazines.
-

Values, Benefits, and Barriers to Healthful Eating

Faye Fair Eater is similar to Betty Better Eater in that she values eating a healthful diet. Faye reports that eating a healthy diet is important to her. Faye shares several perceived benefits with Betty. They both report the long-term benefit that they can avoid future health problems by eating more healthfully. Similarly, Faye, like Betty, reports the perceived short-term benefit that eating “healthy foods” gives her the energy she needs and agrees that eating “healthy foods” improves her physical appearance.



Faye differs from Betty in three important ways. Faye is less likely than Betty to report that she can avoid future health problems by exercising. Both convenience and taste are barriers for Faye. Faye is more likely than Betty to say that “healthy foods” have to be convenient for her to use them, and she is more likely than Betty to report that a reason for not choosing healthy foods is they don’t taste good.

Paula is less likely than Betty to value eating a healthy diet and being physically fit. She is less likely to report that eating a healthful diet is important to her, to think that it is important to look and feel physically fit, and to maintain a proper weight. She is also less likely than Betty to agree that she can avoid future health problems by eating a healthful diet and by exercising. Paula is also less likely to report the perceived short-term benefit that eating “healthy foods” gives her the energy she needs, and that eating “healthy foods” improves her physical appearance.

Faye and Paula, who have lower diet quality scores, are more likely to report that eating healthfully is too complicated and confusing than does Betty.

Nutrition, Food Preparation, and Shopping Habits

The three sets of women all believe they are knowledgeable about health and nutrition (see table 1). They are all interested in improving their diets, and they think they have some weight to lose and try at least occasionally to do so. The three groups also have many similar food planning and preparation practices. They also have many similar shopping habits. For example, all three groups clip coupons from magazines and newspapers and redeem them.

While these three sets of women exhibit many similarities, they differ in a number of important ways in their nutrition, food preparation, and shopping habits. Diet quality or HEI scores differ because this factor was used to segment (divide) the target audience into subsets. Average HEI scores were 67, 56, and 47 percent, respectively, for Betty Better Eater, Faye Fair Eater, and Paula Poor Eater.

Faye differs from Betty in several important ways, though she is similar to Betty in that she worries about the nutritional content of the foods she eats. Faye is less likely than Betty to be making an effort to serve her family nourishing foods. She is also less likely to get upset if the family doesn't eat together. Faye is less likely than Betty to go out of her way to buy nonfat foods. When shopping, Faye is more likely than Betty to pay attention to on-shelf, aisle display ads, and instant coupons. She may also be a more frequent purchaser of prepared foods.

Paula is less likely than Betty to worry about the nutritional content of the foods she eats. She also more readily agrees that most snack foods she likes are unhealthy. Paula is less likely to make every possible effort to see that her family eats nourishing foods and is less likely to get upset if the family doesn't eat together. She is also more likely than Betty to disagree that she discusses foods with her family so they understand nutrition better. When she shops, Paula is less likely to go out of her way to buy nonfat foods. Paula is, however, more likely than Betty to pay attention to instant coupons.

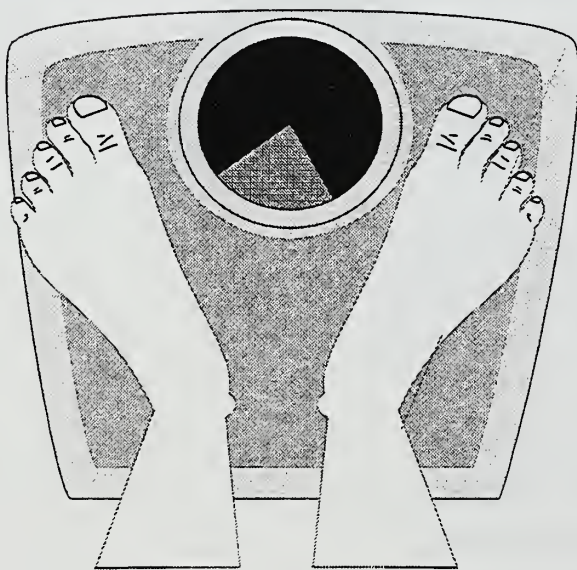


Media

The three groups of women have similar viewership of evening network news, cable news, and cable TV and readership of most magazines and newspapers. However, Faye is more likely than Betty to watch television in general and is more likely to watch entertainment (non-news) shows. Faye is also more likely to watch daytime television. Paula shares these same differences in television viewing. Paula also watches less prime-time television than does Betty. In terms of readership, Paula is less likely to read women's general interest magazines than Betty.

Discussion and Conclusions

Results from the analysis of MRCA data confirm a number of findings from Alliance focus group results. These results, like the focus group findings, underscore that women gatekeepers value good health. The present analysis also confirms that eating healthfully seems to be complicated and confusing to a significant number of women. Consumer interest in moderation was also corroborated by the widespread belief among women sampled that they have some weight to lose, and they try at least occasionally to lose weight.



Some of the differences between the three subsets of women are noteworthy. The women with the better and average quality diets (Betty Better Eater and Faye Fair Eater) experience more long- and short-term benefits from eating more healthfully than do the women with poorer diet quality. They are more apt to report that eating a healthy diet is important to them and are more likely to be concerned about the nutritional content of their diets. They are also currently taking some action to improving their diets.

Women with more average diets (Faye Fair Eaters) experience a mixture of benefits and barriers to healthy eating, which may account for their lower diet quality score. They value eating more healthfully and perceive short- and long-term benefits to doing so are taking some action to improve their diets and are more likely to report that eating healthfully is complicated and confusing than those with higher quality diet scores (Betty Better Eaters). Taste and convenience are especially important to this group of women.

Women with poorer diets (Paula Poor Eaters) are less likely to value eating more healthfully and are less likely to experience the long- and short-term benefits of eating more healthfully than those with the highest diet quality scores (Betty Better Eaters). They are also less likely to know how to eat healthfully. At the same time, they experience the barrier that eating healthfully is complicated and confusing. This lack of a sense of importance, lack of perceived benefits, lack of understanding of how to improve their diets, and experience that eating healthfully is considered to be complicated and confusing combine to prevent this group from taking action to improve their dietary habits.

Program Implications

At first glance, the many characteristics that the three subsets of the Dietary Guidelines Alliance target audience have in common may suggest that the Alliance can successfully use the same approach in reaching all women gatekeepers. Common characteristics that suggest use of the same approach to nutrition education programming are as follows:

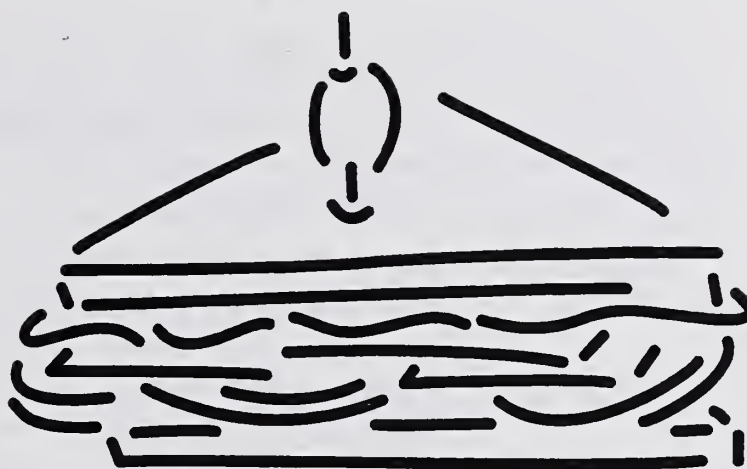
- Generally similar demographic characteristics;
- Importance is placed on living a long and healthy life;
- Interest in improving their diets;
- Interest in weight control; and
- Many similar food planning, preparation, and shopping habits.



Nutrition education messages targeted women gatekeepers as a whole seem promising because all three subsets of women share an interest in improving their diets. This shared interest is encouraging because it suggests that for all three groups, improving dietary behavior is personally relevant and is consistent with their values. When designing activities for the Dietary Guidelines Alliance target audience as a whole, the benefit of weight control has widespread appeal and can be useful to include as part of nutrition messages.

However, a number of important differences exist between these three subsets of women to suggest that different approaches are needed for each subset of women (see table 3). The present analysis suggests that the current approach used by the Dietary Guidelines Alliance, including supporting messages and tips, will be more successful in reaching some subsets of women gatekeepers. Based upon the results of the current analysis, the Alliance messages will work best with women with higher than average diet quality scores (the Betty Better Eaters and Faye Fair Eaters) because they are more likely to report that healthful eating is important to them, experience more benefits from eating healthfully, and are more likely to take action to improve their diets. For Bettys especially, providing tips that are simple, positive, and easy to apply may be enough to build upon their current interest and actions to improve their diets.

The current Dietary Guidelines Alliance approach can be expected to work best with the average eaters (Fayes) because of the program's focus on providing tips and intention to address the barrier that healthful eating is considered by them to be complicated and confusing. This approach of reaching out to the audience of average eaters will most likely have a spillover effect of reaching some of the Bettys by providing tips. It may also have a spillover effect of reaching some of the poorer eaters (Paulas) to the extent it addresses the perception that healthful eating is complicated and confusing.



For the average and poorer eaters (Fayes and Paulas), further emphasis should be placed upon reducing the barriers that healthful eating is complicated and confusing. The presence of this barrier indicates a lack of an adequate framework and context about what comprises a healthful diet. Creating a framework for a healthful diet can provide a basis for decisionmaking about what to eat and can provide a foundation upon which to build additional nutrition principles, concepts, and actions. The essential elements of this framework are the importance of variety and moderation. A "back to basics" approach could convey that "you don't have to be an expert to eat right."

Table 3
Results and Implications in a Nutshell

	Betty Better Eater	Faye Fair Eater	Paula Poor Eater
Who they are:	<p>Values eating a healthful diet</p> <p>Recognizes long-term benefits of eating a healthful diet</p> <p>Recognizes short-term benefits of eating a healthful diet</p> <p>Does not perceive major barriers to healthful eating</p>	<p>Values eating a healthful diet</p> <p>Recognizes long-term benefits of eating a healthful diet</p> <p>Recognizes short-term benefits of eating a healthful diet</p> <p>Barriers present</p>	<p>Eating a healthful diet less important</p> <p>Less likely to recognize long-term benefits of eating a healthful diet</p> <p>Less likely to recognize short-term benefits of eating a healthful diet</p> <p>Barriers present</p> <p>Does not know how to eat a healthful diet</p> <p>Takes few actions to improve diet</p> <p>Watches more daytime, less prime-time TV</p> <p>Responds to some in-store advertising</p> <p>Does not read women's magazines</p>
What to change:	<p>Add to current actions to improve diet</p>	<p>Add to current actions to improve diet</p> <p>Reduce barriers</p>	<p>Change values</p> <p>Create long-term benefits</p> <p>Create short-term benefits</p> <p>Reduce barriers</p> <p>Add to understanding of how to eat a healthful diet</p>
How to change:	<p>Provide tips, recipes</p>	<p>Emphasize convenience, taste</p> <p>Provide tips, recipes that are easy to do</p> <p>Convey message that "you don't have to be an expert to eat right" (variety and moderation)</p>	<p>Build importance of eating a healthful diet</p> <p>Illustrate simple and easy ways to improve the diet</p> <p>Convey message that you don't have to be an expert to eat right (variety and moderation)</p> <p>Use peer or other respected spokespersons to model behavior/convey benefits</p>

Nutrition education efforts for these audiences should promote that the first of these basics is the recommendation to vary the foods you eat in order to obtain the variety of nutrients your body requires; this means trying new foods and avoiding monotonous eating routines. At the same time, moderation, or avoiding extremes, is equally important. Portion size and frequency of eating are fundamental. For example, going to the extreme of eating a high carbohydrate diet by loading up on carbohydrate-containing foods without portion control can lead to unwanted weight gain.

Nutrition efforts should focus on the point that it is also unwise to make dietary changes based on the "study of the day" because the science of nutrition changes slowly by an accumulation of evidence. Conveying messages about variety and moderation in combination with a message that nutrition knowledge changes slowly may reduce the sense of confusion that Faye and Paula experience about what constitutes healthful eating. The emphasis on variety and moderation as the foundation for building a healthful diet will be especially important for Paula Poor Eater who reports that she doesn't know how to eat a healthful diet.

The current Alliance messages will appeal to the poorer eaters (Paula Poor Eater) somewhat but to a lesser extent than those with a higher diet quality (Betty Better Eater and Faye Fair Eater). For the most part, a different approach will be needed to reach Paula that places greater emphasis on changing

values, creating long- and short-term benefits of eating more healthfully, and directly addressing barriers related to eating more healthfully as noted in this report. To do this, nutrition education and promotion efforts for the poorer eaters should emphasize the following:

- Build a sense of importance about eating a healthful diet;
- Add to the knowledge base about how to eat a healthful diet;
- Emphasize variety and moderation (You don't have to be an expert to eat right);
- Use peer or other respected spokespersons to model behavior and convey benefits; and
- Illustrate simple and easy ways including tips to improve one's diet.

This group, in particular, may be encouraged to begin taking action as they experience more short-term benefits that are meaningful and motivating to them.

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